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A History of St. Olaf Choir. By EUGENE E. SIMPSON. (Minneapolis, Augsburg Publishing House, 1921. 188 p. Illustrations.)

The St. Olaf Choir occupies a position in the musical field of the Northwest which can be compared only to that of the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra; and its director, Dr. F. Melius Christiansen, has been accorded general recognition as one of the greatest choral conductors in America. The choir consists of students of St. Olaf College, one of the principal institutions of learning maintained by the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America. Some of them are students in the college's department of music but most of them are not. They all sing for the pure love of singing and are willing to subject themselves to that thorough training and rigid discipline without which choral singing of the highest order cannot be produced. The St. Olaf Choir has frequently been called a human symphony orchestra and its singing has been compared to that of the Vatican Choir.

The development which has brought about this organization is not a long but a very interesting story. It is all told in a very entertaining way in this volume by Mr. Simpson. Although the history in the main is that of the choir it also deals with two institutions which have fostered the choir, St. Olaf College and St. John's Lutheran Church of Northfield. The college was founded as St. Olaf School in 1874 by the Reverend Bernt J. Muus, a pioneer Norwegian clergyman. The school began instruction in two old public school buildings purchased from the city of Northfield. The school also served as a house of worship for the Norwegians of Northfield and vicinity.

No effort will be made in this review to trace the gradual development of the choir and the college. Suffice it to say that this development represents a no less remarkable cultural achievement than the great transformation of the University of Minnesota during the past half century. It is particularly interesting to note that this manifestation of fine musical culture has its original source in that hardy Norse race which has furnished so much of the brawn for the material development of the state.

The volume also contains the story of the life of the director of the choir, told in a most entertaining manner; has an en-

lightening chapter on "Northern Growth and Change in Lutheran Music"; gives an account of the "Genesis of the 1913 Norway Tour"; and tells about the eastern tour of 1920. It concludes with a chapter on "The Choir Training at Home."

This review may have given the impression that the choir and the college have stressed the more spectacular side of their musical efforts. I hasten to assure the reader that modesty is characteristic of the attitude assumed by the St. Olaf College leaders. I may support this assertion by the following quotation from a brief preface by Dr. L. W. Boe, the president of the college:

St. Olaf College has for many years sought to cultivate the art of music. It has done so, not so much from an artistic standpoint as to find a beautiful and adequate means of expressing the spiritual life of the student body, whose ancestry, almost without exception, comes from the mountains and valleys of Norway. Added to this heritage are the life and experiences of pioneer days in this country, days that now are over.

Thru the Choir especially, an attempt has also been made to bring out the wealth of hymnology and song of the Lutheran Church, discovering in this way to our day the common heritage given to us by ages past.

CARL G. O. HANSEN